

Message Text

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S E C R E T CANBERRA 2401

EXDIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, PFOR, AS

SUBJ: NPW VISITS TO AUSTRALIA

REF: CANBERRA 2087

1. ALAN RENOUF (SECRETARY OF DEPT. OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS) TOLD ME APRIL 17 THAT PRIMIN WHITLAM HAS TAKEN INITIAL POSITION, IN DISCUSSION OF CORAL SEA VISIT, THAT HE IS OPPOSED TO THE VISIT OF ANY FOREIGN WARSHIPS UNLESS AUSTRALIA CAN FIRST HAVE ASSURANCES THAT THERE ARE NO NUCLEAR WEAPONS ABOARD. SECRETARY, PM'S DEPT., JOHN MENADUE, WHO RAISED CORAL SEA VISIT WITH PRIMIN, EVIDENTLY DIDN'T ARGUE THE POINT, BUT RELAYED IT BACK TO THE FOREIGN AND DEFENSE DEPARTMENTS WHICH WERE SHOCKED. BOTH FONMIN WILLESEE (WHO DID NOT GET TO PRIMIN ON THIS ISSUE AS ANTICIPATED IN REFTEL) AND DEFENSE MINISTER BARNARD HAVE BOTH WRITTEN LETTERS TO THE PRIMIN POINTING OUT THE SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS OF THIS DECISION AND REQUESTING A COMBINED CALL ON THE PRIMIN TO DISCUSS MATTER SOONEST. UNTIL THIS ISSUE RESOLVED, NOT ONLY IS CORAL SEA VISIT OFF BUT PRESUMABLY ALL NAVAL VISITS, INCLUDING THOSE OF UK AND POSSIBLY OTHERS.

2. RENOUF TOLD ME THAT HE WAS REPORTING THIS TO ME IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE IN THE HOPE THAT, IF THE PRIMIN PERSISTS IN HIS VIEWS, WASHINGTON WILL TAKE THIS UP WITH PRIMIN DURING HIS FORTHCOMING VISIT. HE EXPLICITLY SUGGESTED THAT THE

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PRESIDENT AND/OR SECRETARY OF STATE WEIGH IN.

3. I TOLD RENOUF THAT I FOUND THIS APPALLING, THAT SURELY PRIMIN COULD GRASP THE FAR-REACHING IMPLICATIONS OF HIS POSITION WHICH WAS CONTRARY TO THAT OF GOA OFFICIALS IN THEIR MANY DISCUSSIONS OF THIS AND RELATED ISSUES, AND, IF I MIGHT SAY SO AS A FRIEND, RATHER SUICIDAL. IT MUST BE A CASE OF HIS NOT HAVING FOCUSED ON QUESTION. I PRESSED RENOUF HARD AS TO WHETHER MENADUE HAD "TILTED" THE ISSUE AND I RECEIVED LACONIC REPLY TO THE EFFECT THAT MENADUE HAD NOT BEEN HELPFUL.

4. I GATHERED FROM RENOUF (AND SUBSEQUENTLY FROM ROY FERNANDEZ, FIRST ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE IN DFA) THAT PRIMIN WOULD PROBABLY BE TURNED AROUND BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE OVERSEAS. ON THE OTHER HAND, I WAS VAGUELY DISTURBED THAT RECENT EVENTS IN INDOCHINA MAY BE HAVING A BAD IMPACT ON PRIMIN'S PREVIOUSLY CONSTRUCTIVE ATTITUDES ON DEFENSE ISSUES. THIS LATTER POINT WAS SUBSTANTIATED TO SOME EXTENT WHEN RENOUF, IN EXTENSION OF OUR TALK, MENTIONED THAT PRIMIN HAS REPEATEDLY REFUSED TO CLEAR FONOFF PAPER ON INDOCHINESE REFUGEES. FONOFF PAPER PROPOSES INCLUDING THOSE WHO HAVE HAD SOME CONNECTION WITH AUSTRALIA, SETTING FORTH CATEGORIES BY PRIORITY. ALTHOUGH WILLESEE HAS APPROVED THE PAPER, WHITLAM DOESN'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT THE PROBLEM, SAYING HE WANTS TO PLAY IT BY EAR. HENCE, THERE HAVE BEEN NO SUBSTANTIVE GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS TO DATE OR ANSWERS IN PARLIAMENT TO QUESTIONS ON REFUGEES.

5. PENDING RESOLUTION OF THIS ISSUE, OUR REQUEST FOR DIPLOMATIC CLEARANCE FOR USS CORAL SEA TASK FORCE VISIT TO PERTH/ FREMANTLE IN EARLY MAY WILL NOT RPT NOT BE PRESENTED.
GREEN

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEE.

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